San Joaquin River Hydrologic Region

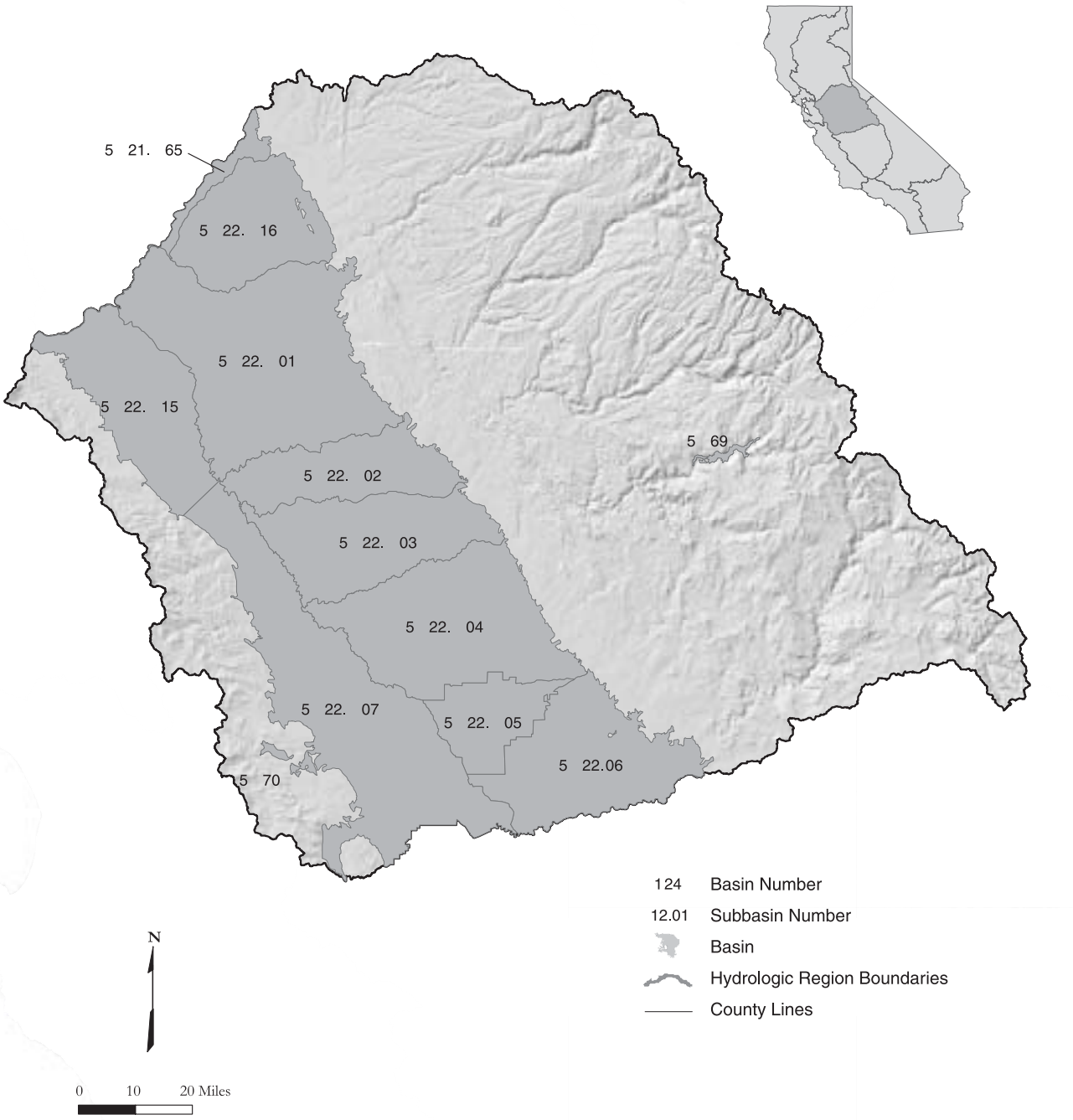

Figure 35 San Joaquin River Hydrologic Region

Basins and Subbasins of the San Joaquin River Hydrologic Region

Basin/subbasin	Basin name
5-22	San Joaquin Valley
5-22.01	Eastern San Joaquin
5-22.02	Modesto
5-22.03	Turlock
5-22.04	Merced
5-22.05	Chowchilla
5-22.06	Madera
5-22.07	Delta-Mendota
5-22.15	Tracy
5-22.16	Cosumnes
5-69	Yosemite Valley
5-70	Los Banos Creek Valley

Description of the Region

The San Joaquin River HR covers approximately 9.7 million acres (15,200 square miles) and includes all of Calaveras, Tuolumne, Mariposa, Madera, San Joaquin, and Stanislaus counties, most of Merced and Amador counties, and parts of Alpine, Fresno, Alameda, Contra Costa, Sacramento, El Dorado, and San Benito counties (Figure 35). The region corresponds to a portion near the middle of RWQCB 5. Significant geographic features include the northern half of the San Joaquin Valley, the southern part of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, the Sierra Nevada and Diablo Range. The region is home to about 1.6 million people (DWR 1998). Major population centers include Merced, Modesto, and Stockton. The Merced area is entirely dependent on groundwater for its supply, as will be the new University of California at Merced campus.

Groundwater Development

The region contains two entire groundwater basins and part of the San Joaquin Valley Groundwater Basin, which continues south into the Tulare Lake HR. The San Joaquin Valley Groundwater Basin is divided into nine subbasins in this region. The basins underlie 3.73 million acres (5,830 square miles) or about 38 percent of the entire HR area.

The region is heavily groundwater reliant. Within the region groundwater accounts for about 30 percent of the annual supply used for agricultural and urban purposes. Groundwater use in the region accounts for about 18 percent of statewide groundwater use for agricultural and urban needs. Groundwater use in the region accounts for 5 percent of the State's overall supply from all sources for agricultural and urban uses (DWR 1998).

The aquifers are generally quite thick in the San Joaquin Valley subbasins, with groundwater wells commonly extending to depths of up to 800 feet. Aquifers include unconsolidated alluvium and consolidated rocks with unconfined and confined groundwater conditions. Typical well yields in the San Joaquin Valley range from 300 to 2,000 gpm with yields of 5,000 gpm possible. The region's only significant basin located outside of San Joaquin Valley is Yosemite Valley. Yosemite Valley Basin supplies water to Yosemite National Park and has substantial well yields.

Conjunctive Use

Since near the beginning of the region's agricultural development, groundwater has been used conjunctively with surface water to meet water needs. Groundwater was and is used when and where surface water is unable to fully meet demands either in time or area. For several decades, this situation was more of an incidental conjunctive use than a formal one. Historical groundwater use has resulted in some land subsidence in the southwest portion of the region.

Groundwater Quality

In general, groundwater quality throughout the region is suitable for most urban and agricultural uses with only local impairments. The primary constituents of concern are TDS, nitrate, boron, chloride, and organic compounds. The Yosemite Valley Groundwater Basin has exceptionally high quality groundwater.

Areas of high TDS content are primarily along the west side of the San Joaquin Valley and in the trough of the valley. The high TDS content of west-side groundwater is due to recharge of streamflow originating from marine sediments in the Coast Range. High TDS content in the trough of the valley is the result of concentration of salts due to evaporation and poor drainage. Nitrates may occur naturally or as a result of disposal of human and animal waste products and fertilizer. Boron and chloride are likely a result of concentration from evaporation near the valley trough. Organic contaminants can be broken into two categories, agricultural and industrial. Agricultural pesticides and herbicides have been detected in groundwater throughout the region, but primarily along the east side of the San Joaquin Valley where soil permeability is higher and depth to groundwater is shallower. The most notable agricultural contaminant is dibromochloropropane (DBCP), a now-banned soil fumigant and known carcinogen once used extensively on grapes and cotton. Industrial organic contaminants include TCE, dichloroethylene (DCE), and other solvents. They are found in groundwater near airports, industrial areas, and landfills.

Water Quality in Public Supply Wells

From 1994 through 2000, 689 public supply water wells were sampled in 10 of the 11 basins and subbasins in the San Joaquin River HR. Samples analyzed indicate that 523 wells, or 76 percent, met the state primary MCLs for drinking water. One-hundred-sixty-six wells, or 24 percent, have constituents that exceed one or more MCL. Figure 36 shows the percentages of each contaminant group that exceeded MCLs in the 166 wells.

Table 28 lists the three most frequently occurring contaminants in each of the six contaminant groups and shows the number of wells in the HR that exceeded the MCL for those contaminants.

Changes from Bulletin 118-80

The subbasins of the San Joaquin Valley, which were delineated as part of the 118-80 update, are given their first numeric designation in this report. Additionally, the Cosumnes Subbasin has been added to the subbasins within the San Joaquin River HR. It is worth noting that the southern portion of the South American Subbasin of the Sacramento Valley Groundwater Basin is also included as part of this HR. The subbasin names and numbers within the region are listed in Table 29.

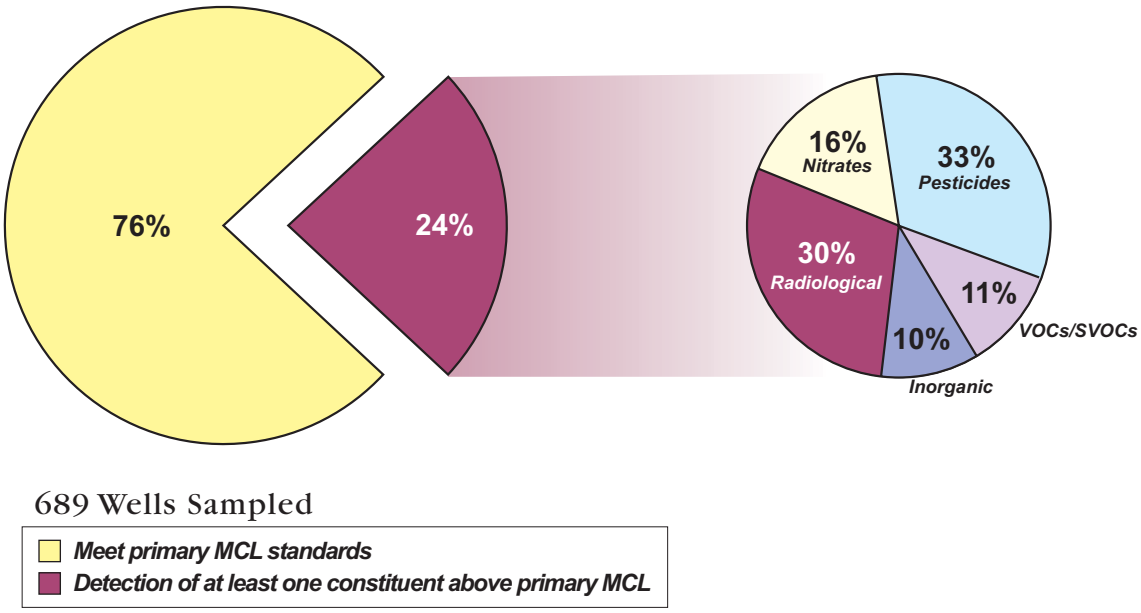

Figure 36 MCL exceedances in public supply wells in the San Joaquin River Hydrologic Region

Table 28 Most frequently occurring contaminants by contaminant group in the San Joaquin River Hydrologic Region

Contaminant group	Contaminant - # of wells	Contaminant - # of wells	Contaminant - # of wells
Inorganics – Primary	Aluminum – 4	Arsenic – 4	4 tied at 2 exceedances
Inorganics – Secondary	Manganese – 123	Iron – 102	TDS – 9
Radiological	Uranium – 33	Gross Alpha – 26	Radium 228 – 6
Nitrates	Nitrate (as NO_3) – 23	Nitrate + Nitrite – 6	Nitrate Nitrogen (NO_3-N) – 3
Pesticides	DBCP – 44	Di(2-Ethylhexyl)phthalate – 11	EDB – 6
VOCs	PCE – 8	Dichloromethane – 3	TCE – 3

DBCP = Dibromochloropropane
EDB = Ethylenedibromide
PCE = Tetrachloroethylene
TCE = Trichloroethylene
VOC = Volatile Organic Compound
SVOC = Semivolatile Organic Compound

Table 29 Modifications since Bulletin 118-80 of groundwater basins and subbasins in San Joaquin Hydrologic Region

Subbasin name	New number	Old number
Eastern San Joaquin	5-22.01	5-22
Modesto	5-22.02	5-22
Turlock	5-22.03	5-22
Merced	5-22.04	5-22
Chowchilla	5-22.05	5-22
Madera	5-22.06	5-22
Delta-Mendota	5-22.07	5-22
Tracy	5-22.15	5-22
Cosumnes	5-22.16	5-22

Table 30 San Joaquin River Hydrologic Region groundwater data

Basin/Subbasin	Basin Name	Area (acres)	Groundwater Budget Type	Well Yields (gpm)		Types of Monitoring			TDS (mg/L)	
				Maximum	Average	Levels	Quality	Title 22	Average	Range
5-22	SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY									
5-22.01	EASTERN SAN JOAQUIN	707,000	A	1,500	-	345	69	540	310	30 - 1,632
5-22.02	MODESTO	247,000	B	4,500	1000-2000	230	15	209	60-500	200-8300
5-22.03	TURLOCK	347,000	B	4,500	1000-2000	307	0	163	200-500	100-8300
5-22.04	MERCED	491,000	B	4,450	1500-1900	378	0	142	200-400	100-3600
5-22.05	CHOWCHILLA	159,000	B	4,750	750-2000	203	0	28	200-500	120-6400
5-22.06	MADERA	394,000	B	4,750	750-2000	378	0	127	200-400	100-6400
5-22.07	DELTA-MENDOTA	747,000	B	5,000	800-2000	816	0	120	770	210-86,000
5-22.15	TRACY	345,000	C	3,000	500-3,000	18	14	183	1,190	210-7,800
5-22.16	COSUMNES	281,000	A	1,500	-	75	13	72	218	140-438
5-69	YOSEMITE VALLEY	7,500	C	1,200	900	0	0	3	54	43-73
5-70	LOS BANOS CREEK VALLEY	4,840	C	-	-	0	0	0	-	-

gpm - gallons per minute
mg/L - milligram per liter
TDS -total dissolved solids